



# United States Lifesaving Association

## National Certification Committee

PO Box 366 • Huntington Beach, California 92648 • Tel: 866-FOR-USLA

[www.usla.org](http://www.usla.org)

Chair

November 10, 2003

B. Chris Brewster

Members

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*Gulf Coast Region*

Cathy Wiederhold  
*Northeast Region*

Dr. Peter Wernick  
*Medical Advisor*

Carl A. Ragasa  
PO Box 424  
Kapaa, HI 96746

Dear Mr. Ragasa:

In a letter dated August 27, 2003, you filed a formal complaint with USLA regarding certification of the Kauai Fire Department ocean lifeguard program. Specifically, you alleged several failures to comply with standards required of USLA certified agencies.

Your complaint was thoroughly investigated by USLA. On November 6, 2003, our National Certification Committee discussed the complaint in detail and concluded that the Kauai Fire Department has appropriately followed the requirements of the USLA Lifeguard Agency Certification Program and, based on all information available to us, remains in compliance. Specifically, the committee determined that the experience level of Kauai's lead training officer for ocean lifeguards exceeds USLA standards by a significant margin. On November 8, 2003, the USLA Board of Directors unanimously agreed with that determination.

As explained in a prior letter, the fact that the ocean lifeguard program was transferred from Parks and Recreation to the Fire Department had no immediate impact on the validity of USLA certification. We certified the program based on the information provided at the time with respect to certain elements. So long as the standards continued to comply with those asserted in the original application, the validity of the certification remained. The certificate sent to the agency at the time stated that it was effective so long as the agency continues to maintain the standards represented to the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors has concluded that those standards did not decline.

A key concern detailed in your letter is that a firefighter named Kini was assigned in January 2001 to take over, "... all open water training and certification of all the [Water Safety Officers]." You stated, "Once again, being Fireman Kini had been a KFD Fireman since March 1990, it is simply impossible for him to ever have been qualified by USLA to be the lead instructor for any USLA sanctioned open water courses."

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Carl Ragasa  
GENERAL FLINT

As previously explained, USLA (as a national body) does not certify or qualify either lifeguards or lifeguard instructors. Rather, we certify lifeguard agencies which demonstrate that they meet our published standards. They are then required to continue to meet those standards as a condition of maintaining certification.

One of the standards for the lead instructor of a USLA certified program is, "Must have worked a minimum cumulative total of 1,000 hours of employment compiled in no fewer than three seasons as a seasonal open water lifeguard or a full time open water lifeguard at a lifeguard agency which meets the standards of USLA." This applies to the lead instructor(s). This experience requirement does not, per se, require that the lifeguard agency for which the lead instructor(s) have worked must have been USLA certified at the time the required experience was acquired. Rather, the experience must have been garnered, "... at a lifeguard agency which meets the standards of USLA." There is also no time limit on when this experience must have been garnered.

USLA has determined that Firefighter Kini was indeed the lead instructor of ocean lifeguard courses after the ocean lifeguard program was moved to the Kauai Fire Department. According to a letter from acting Fire Chief Theodore Williams, Jr., Firefighter Kini has an estimated 16,000 hours of experience as an ocean lifeguard. In addition, according to USLA Certification Officer Ralph Goto, in 1990 Mr. Kini participated in and successfully completed a three-day lifesaving instructor course. As Mr. Goto points out, in 1990, there was no national lifeguard agency certification program. Rather, the program was administered locally by the Hawaii Chapter of USLA.

For these reasons, it has been concluded that your complaint is not sustained.

Lifesaving Aye,



B. Chris Brewster  
Chair

attach: Letter from Carl Ragasa – August 27, 2003  
Letter from Acting Fire Chief Theodore Williams, Jr. – October 7, 2003  
Letter from Ralph S. Goto – September 22, 2003

c: Acting Fire Chief Theodore Williams, Jr.  
Lani Nakazawa, Kauai County Attorney  
USLA President  
USLA Secretary  
USLA Southwest Region President Rob McGowan  
USLA Certification Officer Ralph Goto